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THE U-2 AFFAIR

Ike Insists on Taking Blame

THE U-2 AFFAIR.
By DAVID WISE AND THOMAS B. ROSS

(Editor's Note: This is the eighth of a series of 14 articles condensed from the book, THE U-2 AFFAIR, which tells the story behind the most explosive espionage case of the twentieth century. © Copyright 1962, by David Wise and Thomas B. Ross. Published in New York by Random House, Inc.)

CHAPTER VIII
TO PARIS, IN THE SPRING

Eisenhower had ended up by taking Herter's advice to avoid personal responsibility for the U-2 mission.

But Khrushchev has posed for the President a horned dilemma. If Eisenhower had sent the plane, then the President was responsible not only for the flight but for the lies thereafter. If he did not, then Khrushchev was right, the C.I.A. was flying espionage mission behind the President's back.

The more Eisenhower thought about the situation, the more strongly he felt about it. Overnight, he reversed his decision. He would personally and publicly assume responsibility for an act of espionage.

Shortly before 6:00 P.M. Sunday, the President met in his upstairs study at the White House with Herter, Hagerty, and Goodpaster.

Eisenhower informed Herter that he had changed his mind. He told him to announce the flight had been sent by Presidential authority. He ordered a new statement drafted. It was the first time in American history that a President had taken personal, public responsibility for conducting espionage.

The men in the White House study went to work.

At eleven o'clock the next morning, May 9, a meeting was held in Herter's office to complete the draft of the new statement.

It admitted that aerial spying, including overflights, had been conducted for years under Presidential directives. It left the strong implication they might continue. It blamed the Soviet Union for making such flights necessary.

Ever since Stalin began the cold war, it said, the world had lived in a state of "apprehension with respect to Soviet intentions." Within their tightly closed society, the Russians might be building up for a nuclear sneak attack.

"The government of the United States would be derelict to its responsibility . . . if it did not . . . take such measures as are possible to lessen and to overcome this danger of surprise attack. In fact the United States has not and does not shirk this responsibility.

"In accordance with the National Security Act of 1947, the President has put into effect since the beginning of his Administration directives to gather by every possible means the information required to protect the United States. . . . Under these directives programs have been . . . put into operation which have included extensive aerial surveillance by unarmed civilian aircraft, normally of a peripheral character but on occasion by penetration. Specific missions of these unarmed civilian aircraft have not been subject to Presidential authorization."

What the reporters who received the statement did not know was that it was deliberately ambiguous on the question of future U-2 flights. The men who drafted the statement purposely "fuzzed it up," as one of the participants confided later.

They knew that the press would have to say the Secretary of State had indicated that the flights might continue. But the Secretary of State could later say, truthfully, that he had never really said so.

There was a reason for this.

Eisenhower had made it clear to his inner circle of advisers that he considered the flight a "blown" instrument of espionage and that they would have to stop. At the same time, he was not going to let Khrushchev dictate policy to the United States. There would, therefore, be no more flights, but no announcement either.

That night, in a six-column streamer, the New York Times interpreted the statement the way most papers did:

HERTER INDICATES
FLIGHTS WILL GO ON.

In Moscow, at a Czechoslovak Embassy reception, Khrushchev confronted Thompson but held his fire. Weeks later, at another reception and in another mood, Khrushchev called Thompson forward and began berating him about the U-2 flight.

Thompson replied coolly, "You've been flying over Alaska and elsewhere."

Khrushchev stepped on the United States Ambassador's toe and snapped, "If you do that, you should say excuse me."

The other diplomats were holding their breath, but Thompson refused to be goaded into an argument.

"Come on," he told Khrushchev, "let's have a drink and go on home."

Thompson and Khrushchev had a drink, and went on home.

On Wednesday in Moscow, five hundred correspondents vied for position outside the Chess Pavilion in the Gorki Central Park of Culture and Rest. They were being let inside in groups of fifty to view an exhibition of the remains of the U-2, Power's spy equipment, personal effects, and his signed confession of espionage.

Unexpectedly a big Zil limousine drove up, followed by a bodyguard car. Out popped Khrushchev, who bustled inside through an exit door, to be taken on a special preview of the exhibit.

One wall was lined with glass cases containing Powers' identification cards, currency, survival kit, and the like.

There was certainly no effective attempt by C.I.A. to disguise Powers' identity on the May 1 flight. In addition to his official Defense Department card, he flew over Russia carrying a Social Security card, a Selective Service card, a Georgia driver's license, four seven-cent United States air mail stamps (the kind showing a four-engine jet plane), and a receipt for his car from a West German garage. He also carried several photographs of Barbara,